

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6881

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 AMMAN 0659

NODIS//CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, XF

SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS -- VIEW FROM JORDAN

REF: AMMAN, 603, AMMAN 637, AMMAN 658

SUMMARY: SEE AMMAN 658.

1. OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS I HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF TALKS WITH RIFAI AND THE KING WHICH HAVE INEVITABLY TURNED TO THE PROBLEM OF WHERE WE GO NEXT ON THE ISSUE OF PEACE. THIS CABLE ATTEMPTS A SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF THE VIEW FROM AMMAN.

2. THE JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE: THE KING AND RIFAI CONTINUE TO SEE US AS THE KEY ACTOR; ONLY WE HAVE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH BOTH SIDES THAT CAN MAKE PROGRESS POSSIBLE. AT THIS POINT THE JORDANIAN VIEW OF WHAT THE US CAN DO FALLS FAR SHORT OF WHAT THEY THINK THE US MUST DO. AS WE HAVE SAID MANY TIMES IN THE PAST, THE PRIMARY JORDANIAN MOTIVATION IS STILL TO TRY TO AVOID A WAR. AND WHILE THE NEW SYRIAN CONNECTION MAY WELL INCREASE THEIR CHANCES FOR EARLIER INVOLVEMENT IN ANY WAR THAT MIGHT COME, THEY PROFESS AN HONEST BELIEF THAT THE CONNECTION PROVIDES THEM AN ADDITIONAL REAL OPPORTUNITY TO ACT ON THE SYRIANS TO PREVENT SUCH A WAR BREAKING OUT-- OR FAILING SO TO INFLUENCE THE SYRIANS, OF OPTING OUT THEMSELVES. IN ALL OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS THERE IS A GROWING SENSE OF

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FRUSTRATION AT THE DRIFT OF EVENTS SINCE SINAI II

COUPLED WITH A FEELING THAT THE ONLY COURSE LEFT IS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SYRIA, WHICH THEY BELIEVE HAS CLEARLY TAKEN THE INITIATIVE AWAY FROM THE US IN ITS EFFORTS (MODERATE IN JORDAN'S VIEW) TO GET THE US (AND ISRAEL) TO SEE THAT FULL WITHDRAWAL AND SOMETHING TANGIBLE FOR THE PALESTINIANS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

3. THE JORDANIANS HAVE COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT IN THE PERIOD AFTER SINAI II, INCREASING ARAB DIVISIONS HAVE HELPED TO HARDEN POSITIONS. THEY ALSO SEE, AS THIS HARDENING PROCESS CONTINUES, FURTHER ISRAELI HARDENING. ALL OF THIS SEEMS TO BE COUPLED WITH EFFORTS TO UNDERMINE THE US DOMESTIC CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT A MIDDLE EAST POLICY, WHICH IN THEIR VIEW ARE ORCHESTRATED BY ISRAELI SUPPORTERS IN THE US AND WHICH EFFORTS ARE DESIGNED TO DISTRACT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND DAMAGE OR DESTROY THE US CAPACITY TO BRING ABOUT FORWARD MOVEMENT IN 1976 OR LATER. US PROMISES OF NO STAGNATION OR STALEMATE IN 1976 WITHOUT SIGNS OF MOVEMENT HAVE DAMAGED US CREDIBILITY IN THEIR VIEW. THEY WANT SPECIFICS AND THEY WANT TO SEE US ACT. THEY CONTINUE TO BE DISTURBED BY WHAT THEY SEE AS A HEAVY DOSE OF EGYPT-FIRST IN OUR POLICY AND THEY NOW ALSO DETECT THAT OUR REGULAR EXCHANGE OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEM HAS BECOME MORE GENERAL, RESERVED AND LESS FRANK, I AM SURE THEY ASSUME THIS HAS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF THEIR NEW CONNECTION WITH SYRIAN AND THEIR CRITICISM OF SINAI II. AS REGARDS THEIR CRITICISM OF SINAI II, WHILE THEY ARE CAREFUL TO TRY TO INTERPRET SUCH CRITICISM IN THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT FOR US, THEY AT ROCK BOTTOM BELIEVE THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS A MISTAKE FOR EGYPT AND WOULD PROBABLY STILL BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF A RAPPROCHMENT WITH SYRIA, ALTHOUGH IN THAT CASE, THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN LESS VOCAL ABOUT IT.

4. OPTIONS: LOOKING AT THE OPTIONS ON STEPS FOR THE FUTURE AND OUR ASSESSMENT OF JORDANIAN REACTIONS, FOR PURPOSES OF ORDERING THEM, WE LOOK FIRST AT BILATERAL STEPS, AND THEN SUBSEQUENTLY AT MORE FAR REACHING MULTILATERAL EFFORTS.

5. THE JORDANIAN REACTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF VARIOUS
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ADDITIONAL BILATERAL STEPS IS NEGATIVE. CANVASSING THE SPECIFIC CASES, OUR SUMMATION OF THEIR VIEWS WOULD BE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) GOLAN - SYRIA IS NOW FIRMLY LINKED TO A POLICY REQUIRING PLO PARTICIPATION IN THE NEXT STEP ON NEGOTIATION. SYRIANS, JORDANIANS SAY, WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ON GOLAN UNLESS COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL IS INVOLVED AND EVEN THEN SOMETHING FOR THE PALESTINIANS MIGHT BE REQUIRED. SYRIANS DO NOT WANT AND SEE NO VALUE

IN A FEW HUNDRED METERS ON THE GOLAN. THEY WOULD NOT REFUSE, AS JORDAN SUGGESTS, A UNILATERAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL ON THE GOLAN ENGINEERED BY THE UNITED STATES. THE JORDANIANS DO NOT HOLD OUT ANY HOPE THAT WE COULD DO THIS WITH THE ISRAELIS.

(B) SINAI-- JORDAN IS WORRIED THAT EGYPT WILL TRY FOR A THIRD STEP ON THE SINAI. THEY BELIEVE EVEN SADAT RECOGNIZES HE CANNOT DO SO AGAINST THE KIND OF ARAB OPPOSITION MOUNTED EX POST FACTO AGAINST SINAI II. JORDAN IS AFRAID EGYPT, AND MAYBE EVEN ISRAEL, AGREE ON ONE OF TWO NECESSARY PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCH A MOVE:

(1) SYRIA KNOCKED OUT IN A WAR BY ISRAEL, THUS DEFUSING SYRIA'S PRESENT ANTI-SADAT LEADERSHIP ROLE, OR (2) JORDAN'S ACCEPTING SOME SORT OF WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT, THUS HELPING TO COVER A NEXT EGYPTIAN STEP. WHILE BOTH OF THESE ALTERNATIVES HAVE A FAR FETCHED QUALITY ABOUT THEM, JORDAN'S RECENT DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH EGYPT SEEM TO HAVE ENCOURAGED KING AND RIFAI TO PUT SOME FAITH BEHIND THEIR SUSPICIONS THAT SUCH AN EFFORT IS PART OF AN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI (AND PERHAPS EVEN US-INSPIRED) PLAN. THEY SAY THEY HAVE DISCUSSED THIS VIEW WITH ASAD AND BOTH JORDAN AND SYRIAN TAKE IT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO BE CAREFUL. IF THE ABOVE IS TRUE, AND IF SUCH A CONCLUSION ON THE PART OF ASAD ADDS TO WHAT WE ALREADY UNDERSTAND IS HIS LACK OF INTEREST IN PROVOKING AN ISRAELI ATTACK BECAUSE OF SYRIA'S CURRENT MILITARY WEAKNESS AND A FEAR THAT EGYPT MIGHT STAY OUT OF THE CONFLICT FOR A TIME, THEN THIS CONCLUSION CAN HAVE A RATHER RESPONSIBLE (IF ONLY MARGINAL) IMPACT ON SYRIAN (AND JORDANIAN) FUTURE ACTIONS. HERE ONLY TIME WILL TELL WHAT A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE AND "LIE LOW" MEAN IN POLICY TERMS FOR DAMASCUS AND AMMAN.

(C) THE WEST BANK (JERUSALEM AND GAZA) - JORDANIAN VIEWS ON THIS QUESTION HAVE BEEN HIGHLY DEVELOPED SINCE
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NODIS/CHEROKEE

THE RABAT SUMMIT AND HAVE BEEN REPEATED AD NAUSEUM IN CABLES FROM AMMAN. RECENT ISRAELI PUBLICITY ABOUT RE-OPENING THE POSSIBILITY HAS BROUGHT A REITERATION OF THESE STATEMENTS FROM JORDAN. IN SUM, JORDAN WILL ABIDE BY THE RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS (AND NOT TRY TO CHANGE THEM) UNLESS OR UNTIL: (1) THE ARAB LEADERS (OR PRINCIPALLY EGYPT, SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA) CHANGE JORDAN'S ROLE AND PROVIDE BACKING FOR SUCH A NEGOTIATION, AND THIS CHANGE CANNOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL ISRAEL OFFERS SOMETHING SUBSTANTIVE -- IN THE MOST EXTREME FORM FULL WITHDRAWAL FROM WEST BANK, JERUSALEM AND GAZA IN FAVOR OF PEACE WITH JORDAN, OR (2) AN ISRAELI OFFER OF FULL WITHDRAWAL IN FAVOR OF JORDAN IS MADE, IN WHICH CASE RIFAI HAS TOLD ME THAT JORDAN WOULD ACCEPT A NEGOTIATING ROLE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE OTHER ARABS. JORDAN CANNOT SHORT OF THOSE CONDITIONS CONSIDER SUCH STEPS AS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN 1974, 10 KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RIVER, BALLONS AND SAUSAGES OF TERRITORY AROUND JERICHO, NABULUS, HEBRON AND SO FORTH. FURTHER, JORDAN BELIEVES THE PLO SHOULD BE PUSHED TO NEGOTIATE. THEY SEEM UNSHAKEABLE IN THE BELIEF (IN MY JUDGMENT TOO UNQUESTIONINGLY SO) THAT THE PLO COULD NOT SURVIVE INTACT AN EFFORT AT NEGOTIATING. THEY SEE A SIMPLE SCENARIO EVOLVING WHEREBY THE PLO TRIES TO NEGOTIATE AND FAILS (BECAUSE OF THE INTERNAL DISARRAY BROUGHT ON ITSELF), WITH THE ARAB LEADERS THEN TURNING TO JORDAN FOR A TRY. JORDANIANS ARE PREPARED WITH GREAT PATIENCE TO WAIT OUT THIS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FULL TIME REQUIRED. RABAT HAS
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BROUGHT THEM TOO MUCH IN THE WAY OF BENEFIT TO TRY FOR A CHANGE THEMSELVES. BEYOND THIS TACTICAL POINT, RIFAI IN PARTICULAR HAS A DEEP SENSE THAT THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE MUST BE RESOLVED. HE JOINS MANY IN THINKING THAT IF AT SOME FUTURE TIME A WEST BANK PALESTINIAN STATE DOES EMERGE, IT WILL PROBABLY EVENTUALLY HAVE TO JOIN IN SOME FASHION WITH JORDAN. KING AND RIFAI ARE STILL ALSO DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT AND SUSPICIOUS OF PLO MOTIVES WHICH THEY ASSUME INVOLVE TAKING OVER JORDAN AT SOME POINT AS PART

OF A FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATE. THEY ARE EVEN MORE JUMPY ABOUT RIGHTWING ISRAELI STATEMENTS FROM THE ARKI SHARON SCHOOL OF MUSCULAR DIPLOMACY, WHEN SUCH STATEMENTS CONTINUE TO SUGGEST THAT THE HASHEMITES ARE THE NEWCOMERS AND THAT THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD LOOK FOR THEIR "ERETZ FALASTIN" ON THE EAST BANK OF THE JORDAN. IN SUM, UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS, DISENGAGEMENT ON THE WEST BANK UNDER MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TERMSS LOOKS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO THE JORDANIANS.

6. IN THE MULTILATERAL CONTEXT, THE JORDANIANS, AND, WE SUSPECT, THE SYRIANS AND MAYBE EVEN THE EGYPTIANS, VIEW GENEVA, OUR PORPOSALS FOR AN INFORMAL GET TOGETHER, OR FOR A MORE FORMAL-SOUNDING PREPARATORY CONFERENCE AS ALL RAISING THE SAME SORT OF ISSUE -- WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE PALESTINIANS. WE HAVE EXPLORED THIS WITH THEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION OF THE PALESTINIANS AT GENEVA OR ELSEWHERE AND THE TACTICS OF PROVIDING FOR THAT DEVELOPMENT. THE JORDANIANS BELIEVE THAT US DEMANDS FOR PRIOR PALESTINIAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE RECOGNITION OF THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AND ACCEPTANCE OF 242 AND 338 CAME CLOSE TO BEING ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PROPOSED UNSC RESOLUTION IN JANUARY, WITH THE NECESSARY REVERSE REQUIREMENTS ON THE US AND ISRAEL THAT PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND EVENTUAL OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE STATEHOOD ALSO BE RECOGNIZED. JORDAN DOES NOT SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL COULD BE A USEFUL NEGOTIATING FORUM (ALTHOUGH AT ONE TIME IN THE PAST IT DID SEE SOME BENEFIT IN USING IT TO KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM ON THE ISSUE). UN-FORTUNATELY, JORDAN AND IT SEEMS MOST OF THE OTHER ARABS, HAVE NOT GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO THE SUBSTANTIVE SIDE
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OF GENEVA OR ELSEWHERE.

7. ON ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA (OR ANOTHER TYPE MULTILATERAL GET TOGETHER), JORDAN'S PUBLIC POSITION HITS NOTES OF UNCERTAINTY. ON THE ONE HAND THEY SAY THEY ARE BOUND BY THE RABAT SUMMIT DECISION AND IMPLY THEY CANNOT GO; ON THE OTHER HAND THEY SAY THEY ARE A CONFRONTATION STATE AND SHOULD BE AT GENEVA, PERHAPS ONLY FOR THE FINAL ACT OF SETTLEMENT. PRIVATELY, THEY ARE COMPLETELY FLEXIBLE AND WILL WANT TO DECIDE ON THE BASIS OF WHAT THE OTHER ARABS WANT AND THE BALANCE OF ADVANTAGES FOR THEM EITHER TO ATTEND OR TO STAY AWAY.

8. RECENTLY, I HAVE DISCUSSED WITH THEM SOME OF THE VARIOUS FORMULAE WHICH HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED ON THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN ATTENDANCE AT TENEVA. HERE THEY HAVE BEEN

AND PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO BE HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY ASAD. THEY NOW READ ASAD'S OWN POSITION AS NO ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA WITHOUT AN INVITATION BEING EXTENDED TO A PLO DELEGATION FROM THE START.

(A) PLO IN JORDAN DELEGATION - THEY ARE OPPOSED TO THIS APPROACH. THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO HIDE THE PLO IN THEIR GROUP AT THE TABLE (ASSUMING THEY GO TO GENEVA OR TO A PREPARATORY, FOREIGN MINISTERS OR OTHER INFORMAL CONFERENCE.) THEY ASSUME PLO WOULD REJECT THIS ALSO. THEY WOULD ALSO BE SENSITIVE TO THE SYRIAN VIEW THAT THE PLO SHOULD BE THERE ON ITS OWN.

(B) PLO IN SYRIAN DELEGATION - THEY DO NOT BELIEVE SYRIA (OR PLO) WOULD ACCEPT THIS ON THE BASIS OF WHAT SYRIA HAS TOLD THEM AND OF WHAT THEY KNOW OF THE PLO POSITION.

(C) PLO IN AN ALL ARAB DELEGATION. THEY ALSO CLAIM THIS WOULD NOT WORK, ALTHOUGH THEY SEEM LESS CATEGORICAL AND RECOGNIE THERE WAS SOME PRECEDENTAL VALUE IN THE FORMULA EVOLVED FOR THE EC-ARAB DIALOGUE. THEY ARE NOT SURE EGYPT AND SYRIA COULD BE PULLED TOGETHER ON THIS APPROACH.

(D) INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS AS A PRELIMINARY FOR A
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CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD COVER PALESTINIAN (PLO) ATTENDANCE AND PRESUMABLY SET UP SUCH. THEY BELIEVE SYRIA AND OTHERS WOULD (OR SHOULD) DEMAND INITIAL PLO PARTICIPATION, RAISING THE PROBLEMS NOTED ABOVE ALL OVER AGAIN.

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NODIS//CHEROKEE

9. THE PREFERRED SOLUTION TO THE JORDANIANS WOULD BE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO ASSIST IN ISSUING AN INVITATION TO THE PLO TO ATTEND FROM THE OUTSET AND THEN USE ITS PRESSURE AND PERSUASION TO BRING ISRAEL ALONG. THEY ALSO KNOW IN JORDAN THAT WE HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY URGED BY SYRIA AND EGYPT TO OPEN BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH THE PLO. THEY ARE NOT NOTABLY DEMONSTRATIVE IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR (OR FOR THAT MATTER THEIR OBJECTION TO) SUCH A STEP. CLEARLY THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE US CONCTACTS WITH THE PLO, SHOULD THEY EVOLVE, MOVE IN A WAY WHICH WOULD MAKE IT EASY FOR THE PLO TO NEGOTIATE WITHOUT HAVING TO ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESULTS, WHICH JORDAN IN TURN SEES AS PROVIDING THE FORCE WHICH WILL BREAK UP THE PLO.

10. OTHER IDEAS HAVE FLOATED IN AND OUT OF AMMAN, BOTH TACTICAL AND PROCEDURAL. THE CURRENT FAVORED COURSE OF ACTION HERE, IN THE ABSENCE OF ANYTHING FROM THE US AND QUITE POSSIBLY IN OPPOSITION TO ANYTHING WHICH WE SUGGEST WHICH DOES NOT GO VERY FAR IN MEETING SOME OF THE BASIC ARAB INTERESTS, WILL BE TO CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR ACTION IN SUCH BODIES AS THE UN OR NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCES, TO GET BROAD ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES IN THE RECENTLY VETOED UNSC RESOLUTION. THIS MOVE WOULD THEN LEAD TO AN EFFORT TO EXPEL ISRAEL FROM THE UN AND FURTHER TO ISOLATE THE US AND ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. FOR SYRIA THIS HAS THE ADDED BENEFIT ALSO OF INCREASING EGYPT'S ISOLATION AND SADAT'S UNEASE. SOME OF THE DANGERS (PROVOKING A WAR WITH ISRAEL) ARE RECOGNIZED, BUT HOW FAR A CLEAR PERCEPTION OF THOSE DNAGERS WILL BE A MITIGATING FACTOR
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CANNOT BE SEEN NOW FROM HERE. WHILE JORDAN PROGABLY DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE IN SUCH EXTREME TACTICS (EXPELLING ISRAEL FROM UN) THEY DO NOT HOWEVER APPEAR WILLING TO OPPOSE THE DETERMINED SYRIAN (AND PROBABLY UNITED ARAB) INTENTION TO PUSH THIS COURSE, PARTLY BECAUSE (A) THEY HAVE NO BETTER SHORT-TERM COURSE TO PROPOSE, (B) THEY CONSIDER THE UN ISSUE A SOMEWHAT MARGINAL ONE COMPARED TO THE CENTRAL NEGOTIATING PROBLEM, AND (C) BECAUSE THEY REALIZE THAT JORDANIAN OBJECTIONS WOULD IN ANY CASE NOT DISCOURAGE THE SYRIANS.

11. THE CENTRAL THEME OF THIS ASSESSMENT IS THAT JORDAN WOULD LIKE TO SEE CONTINUING POSITIVE ACTION FROM

THE UNITED STATES THIS ELECTION YEAR, BUT IS INCREASINGLY
DESPAIRING OF SEEING SUCH . IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH ACTION,
JORDANIAN AND SYRIAN POSITIONS WILL CONTINUE TO HARDEN
AND THE PROCESS OF REPOLARIZING THE AREA WILL CONTINUE.
THE SYRIANS WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE INITIATIVE
WHICH WE (OR SO IT SEEMS IN AMMAN) HAVE LET GO. THEY
HOPE BY THIS SHORT TERM TACTIC TO FORCE A MORE " REALISTIC"
ASSESSMENT ON THE US OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE AREA,
EDUCATE THE US PUBLIC, AND BRING MORE US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL FOR
A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WHICH IS BASED ON A FULL RETURN OF THE
OCCUPIED TERRITORY AND A SIGNIFICANT SETTLEMENT FOR THE
PALESTINIANS. THERE ARE HOWEVER STILL SOME STRONG RESERVATIONS
IN AMMAN ABOUT HOW FAR THE LATTER POINT SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO
EVOLVE WITHOUT THEM.
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